# CHRISTIANITY AND MACHT-POLITIK

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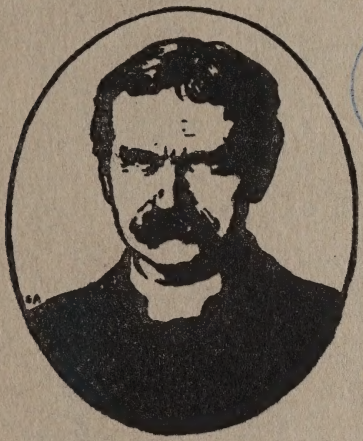

BY

D. S. CAIRNS, D.D.

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AS the war has gone on the issues of it have cleared greatly. To begin with, an outside observer might have been excused if he saw in it simply a struggle between rival nations for a place in the sun, the Russian people impelled by religious and historic traditions and an almost blind national instinct, feeling for the sunshine and the sea, pressing on to Santa Sophia and the Golden Horn, and crossing the path of the *Drang nach Osten* of Germany, while France, seeking her *Revanche* and her lost provinces, and Britain, fearing for her mastery of the seas, were dragged into the conflict. But the progress of events has surely disclosed the superficiality of this view. Whether they are true or false these explanations do not exhaust the matter or disclose the fundamental issues as they are now laid bare. Can anyone suppose that if these had been the real issues the United States would ever have entered the war? Would such reasons

have led the most practical people, perhaps, in the world, a people drawn from many races, living at an almost unmanageable remoteness from the scene of conflict, against all its cherished traditions and its own immediate interests to plunge into the bloody maelstrom of a European War? They who can believe that can believe anything.

We are witnessing something far deeper and vaster, something which touches humanity far more intimately than a war of territorial ambitions like most of the wars of history.

Issues are now raised which must affect the whole future of the human race. If they are decided on the side of Freedom and of Peace the result will be worth every drop of blood and every coin that has been spent. Should they be lost, the world will surely enter a dark and stormy age of waning liberties and repeated wars. Those who believe in God believe that even thus His final purposes cannot fail, but the way back to the true path for humanity can only be after immeasurable degradation and suffering. "Dark is the path and long, that out of hell leads forth to light."

What is really at stake now is the basis of a lasting peace of the world. So radical an issue has never been raised in human history before. That history is full of wars. It is a "bath of blood." Just because it is so, men assume that

thus it must always be. But the same thing precisely is true of slavery, and slavery, in its legal and public form, at least, has vanished. Once it was a thing accepted by everybody as part of the natural and even Divine Order. Earlier still, we are told, it was counted a step upwards in human progress when captives in war were enslaved, instead of being slaughtered.

What has brought about the change—that what was once regarded as philanthropy is now regarded as anti-social crime? More causes than one have brought it about: economic developments, the progress of knowledge, the humanising of religion by Christ, the influence of His Church. We may summarise these workings of God's Providence and Spirit by saying that there arose gradually the sense that slavery was in every way an anachronism, and that it stood right in the way of all progress and happiness; and then it had to go. It must have seemed impossible to uproot so deep and enduring an institution, ramifying so intimately through all the social organisms. Yet the impossible happened, and after one vast national upheaval, the American Civil War, a life and death struggle with an alien parasitic growth, slavery went.

In like manner war is rapidly becoming a moral anachronism, and here also there are contributing

causes. The growth of scientific knowledge has given man a control over the destructive forces of nature, which, if carried but a little farther, might obviously make warfare so destructive that it would have to terminate if the race were not to perish. The immense increase of wealth has made national conscription possible, and this, with the development of means of travel and inter-communication, has made possible, also, the huge alliances which can now pour their hosts into the arena. The world is growing into an economic whole, and this has dragged well-nigh the whole race into a strife between European nations.

Now nearly all these forces are still in process of development. Knowledge of Nature is on the increase, and inter-communication is bound to grow. As for conscription it has now its grip on the man-power of all the countries, but what we have witnessed in this war is practically a new thing, the drafting of women into the great armies of labour to take the place of the men, and the deliberate extension of the crippling and maiming and destroying forces of war to non-combatants, the aged, the women and the children. Moreover the economic and political conquest of well-nigh the whole earth by the western races has brought into their military reserves great numbers of war-like peoples at a lower stage of culture. The next

step will necessarily be to conscript all these reserves and throw them into the arena, with all the new abominations that that will necessarily imply. Prolong and intensify warfare only a little, and much that is now done with reluctance and shame will become a commonplace. Humanity is, in truth, approaching an absolute impasse. The hour is drawing near when it has got to choose between what is life and what is death for the whole higher life of man, the hour when conscience and the soul of man must raise their irrevocable protest in the name of the Eternal and of the whole future of the human race.

The growing sense of this dread alternative is at last having its effect on wide circles in all lands. They see that a new and radical issue is up in human history.

There is some temptation in lands into which the war has not come to draw the conclusion that, in view of these things, the true course is, in the name of what is at stake, to call all the peoples at war to immediate peace, and to do so on the tacit assumption that all are equally responsible for the horror that is going on. Into this question of responsibility I do not propose to enter in this pamphlet; not that I have any doubt as to the broad merits of the question or the verdict of his-

tory, but because it has already been so fully discussed by others.

My purpose here is not to review the past, but to look out on the future, and to ask: "What are the conditions of a lasting peace?" It is too often the habit of Christian men and women to discuss this question in a perfunctory way: to say that wars are due to the evil of the human heart, and that so long as men cleave to evil there must be war. Such reasoning is one of the great contributory causes of the present war, one of the reasons why the Christian Church has been so impotent to prevent this evil. If we do not look more deeply into the matter we shall be of no use in averting the greater calamities that lie ahead. Precisely the same thing was said about slavery. It was natural, therefore it was inevitable, therefore it was right. Yet slavery has gone.

## I.

First of all, let us be clear on one point. Only a few strongly believing men believe that this war may be the end of all wars. But there is reason and experience as well as faith in believing that this war may set human society on a new and firmer basis, on which the gradual elimination of

war may be posssible and natural. That basis is Freedom. By Freedom we mean "the inherent right of a man to be guided by his own inner light in making the most of life, its opportunities and its power of thought." The only limit to this freedom is that it shall not impair the like freedom of others.

Personal freedom leads inevitably to the demand for national independence from the sway of other nations by force. It implies "government of the people by the people for the people." "Liberty of conscience or the right to govern one's actions by one's highest moral conceptions, undeterred by vexatious restrictions of law, custom, or opinion; liberty of thought or the right to follow fearlessly the guidance of reason, without respect to the conventions or prejudices of the herd even though they be embodied in law; political liberty or the right to be free from the dictation of arbitrary authority, and the right to share in the making of the laws: these are the supreme demands which the spirit of liberty makes." *

Now the whole course of modern history reveals this spirit of freedom setting through it like a resistless tide. Waves rise and fall, there are great eddies and backwaters, but the tide moves on. Not one of the free and democratic peoples

* Ramsay Muir: *Nationalism and Internationalism.*

has as yet fully realised its ideal. It is therefore easy to point out inconsistencies in matters of detail, just as we can do between the ideals and the practice of any individual. But this spirit of freedom is there like a sleepless conscience, pointing out the better way, and giving no rest to the people that has once seen the ideal. In the end of the day political liberty has its roots in religion, in man's responsibility to God. Our life is given us by Him as a trust, "a little holding lent to do a mighty labour," and it is involved in the very nature of a trust that we shall be free to exercise it, and cannot delegate that freedom to others, making them, instead of Him, the lords of conscience and will. Other methods of government may lead to better immediate material results, more wealth and comfort, more power, and more fame. But it is the faith of the free peoples that such methods produce a lower type of man, because they trench on man's relation to God. Trace the modern faith in freedom to its roots, and it will be found to rest in the Christian estimate of the sacredness of personality and of life as a trust from Almighty God.

There is, therefore, no hope for any enduring peace of the world that does not rest upon this foundation of freedom, for that is itself based on man's relation to God. If humanity is to live and

grow, the spirit of life within it will be in incessant rebellion against the order that is opposed to it. The enlightened conscience of humanity will be for war rather than for a peace which sacrifices freedom, and in the end of the day it will break up all treaties, and overthrow all leagues, and prove itself stronger than all the armed hosts and all the devil's laboratory of destruction that is enlisted to keep it down. The death sentence on all social or ecclesiastical structures that deny the rights of the free spirit was spoken by our Lord: "Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

There is no shadow of hope for a world peace that ignores freedom and its consequence in the independence of nationalities. But it is surely clear since Brest-Litovsk, if it had been in any way seriously in doubt before, that the German autocracy has learned absolutely nothing as to this cardinal point from all the experiences of these years of war. Nowhere is its true spirit more clearly seen than in its demand for the retrocession of Armenia to Turkey. Europe rebuilt on these principles will have in it the conditions of unending war, and in fact this is precisely what the military power which at present controls Germany contemplates and believes in and will strive

for until it has riveted its sway on the world.

With a spirit like this in the ascendant in the world, national conscription of the most drastic type must necessarily continue, and the race of armaments with it. The League of Nations would obviously be an absurdity under such conditions. Were such a League framed to ratify a settlement like this and to enlist the armed forces of the world in its defence, it would be a league with death and a covenant with hell, though it preserved peace for ever. We shall never secure peace until we have secured freedom. But when we have secured freedom and made the world safe for democracy we shall not necessarily have secured peace.

II.

There cannot be peace among the nations until it is recognised that there is an Eternal Law over them all—that there is a final arbitrament other than that of force, a common interest of all the peoples of humanity, and in particular of the peoples of Christendom, to whom has fallen the leadership in the work of modern civilisation. The right to freedom rests on man's responsibility to God. For what is he responsible? For the trust of human life, its use for the accomplishment of

the purpose of God to all humanity. The purpose of God must manifest His character. His character is revealed in His laws as well as in His purpose. All this is just as true of nations as of men. They are responsible to God. They are under the laws of God, which demand justice and good faith between the peoples.

The moment in which we maintain that the ultimate appeal as between nations rests in the last issue on force, we deny the whole Christian revelation of God, and indeed every spiritual interpretation of life, every form of faith which puts the moral character and God at the foundation of all things. Thus the whole force policy in the end of the day means an implicit denial of God.

There can be no enduring peace on such a foundation. It is surely too late in human history to believe that men will settle down to the true work of the nations on any other understanding than that on which all civilised States now rest for their internal life: the ideal that justice must be done though the heavens should fall. The state that denied this, and ceased to aim at it, would soon be dissolved into just such warring elements as is Christendom to-day. There is no chance whatever of any peace that can last, if there be no right and wrong for nations as for men. How have men been slowly taught that

there is a moral order for them that is over their own lusts and vanities? By the stern schooling of experience. They have been moralised by the re-action of the Universe upon them, which has taught them that sin meant death.

Such tragic experiences have awakened them to moral realities. The experiences are not to be confused with the moral realities to which they awaken the consciences of men. Justice, mercy and truth are more than simply expedient courses of action, which bring in the long run happiness and progress to the nations that practise them. They inhere in the very nature of God. But the human race has been awakened to this by the dread consequences of ignoring or denying them. Sin, in the long run, invariably works death, and it is the accumulated experience of this that has gradually taught men, as it is teaching nations, to see the moral and spiritual realities.

But this education has not as yet fully penetrated to the sphere of national relationships. It is openly denied that there is any absolute moral law in this sphere by all who believe in *Macht-Politik*. But as we have seen, the deadly fallacy is now working itself out in consequence. Sin is working death at this moment on the most colossal scale in human history. What is the particular evil which is disclosing its true nature in these

appalling results? In the judgment of the writer it is precisely this idea that, in all matters affecting the relations of States with one another, the last appeal is to force.

We must distinguish here. As things are at present there is nothing for it, even for the wronged party, but to fight for its most sacred possessions and for the future of the world. We have to use force as an instrument of morality. But something much more than this is meant by *Macht-Politik*. It means that there is no moral law governing the nations, that in the judgment of Eternity force ought to govern in this sphere—that justice, humanity and truth are matters of the internal life of the State alone, and are not obligatory on the nations in their dealings with one another.

That is the truly infernal doctrine which is now working itself out in death and ruin, and that, if it is not overthrown, will bring death and ruin to all the world. In the end of the day it means the negation of God, and the world based upon it, should it triumph, would be "the negation of God erected into a system." Consider what the consequences would be. Since there was no moral law between the nations, there would be no such thing in their relations as good faith or honour, far less disinterested service. How could there

be? The entire practice of diplomacy would be solely governed by calculations as to the balance of destructive forces behind it, lying would become a virtue, and candour a mere mask for craft, and successful violence would justify everything. It may be said that that is precisely what has prevailed for many years. Diplomacy has been an "outlaws' market" where each nation has not only to make the best bargain it can, but at the same time to watch the knife hand of the nation it is bargaining with. Precisely, and this is what has brought on the war. But the world has either got to become worse or better in this regard, and the way of death is *Macht-Politik*. There is, to speak humanly, no tolerable life possible for humanity until it has become thoroughly discredited, and the law of the brute displaced by the law of God.

It is said that defeat in the field is no guarantee of this: that the use of force can never destroy the love of force. That is a half-truth only. We do not count it true when we have to deal with crimes of violence in private life. The very people who use it will tell you that victory in war fills a nation with arrogance. They believe that successful force tends to elate a nation and encourage it in ways of conquest. Yet in the next moment they will tell you that defeat can have no influence in

restoring a nation to that moderation and sanity that make for peace!

Again, it is often said that all nations, as such, believe in *Macht-Politik,* that they all equally deserve therefore to suffer for it, and that the best issue will be one which is indecisive. I do not believe that history will say this. Even granting for argument's sake that there may have been some apparent reason for those outside the struggle believing it at the beginning, is it credible now? Would any member of the Entente have handed Armenia back to Turkey? Surely a heaven-defying crime like this casts a blazing light back on all the obscure places of the involved story of the diplomacy of the war. Can the minds and hearts which planned the invasion of Belgium and the terms of Brest-Litovsk be entrusted with the beginning of the League of Nations? Is there any hope on such a basis for the peace of the world? To maintain it is to cry Peace, Peace, where, in the nature of things, there can be no peace. Can any League of Nations endure which is based upon the principle that nations as such have no moral rights? Is not that principle taught and professed, as a matter of course, in the ruling military circles in Germany, and illustrated by the demand for the retrocession of Russian Armenia,

absolutely fatal to the idea of a lasting peace? Could Switzerland, Scandinavia, Holland give their quota of force to maintain a League inspired by this spirit? Could they do this and keep their souls alive?

They have had to make not a few such decisions in their stormy and gallant histories, and because of these their honour is dear and their name imperishable among all the free peoples.

## III.

It may confidently be believed that there is general agreement among the peoples as to these two indispensable conditions of a lasting peace, the conservation of the liberty and independence of the nations, and the recognition of the Divine Law as between nations. There may be more question as to the third and last point, which will be dealt with here.

Yet in truth the others inevitably lead on to it, and find in it at once their justification and their end. Why has God given man rights? That he may be free to do his duty and seek His Kingdom. Why has He created nations and set them in a moral order? That they may reveal His nature and His purpose, and that they may serve

Humanity. "Nationality," said Mazzini, "is Mission!"

This is the great thought that is now coming up, dim and vast and radiant on the horizon. In all the diplomacy of the past the primary concern of statesmen has been to think first and mainly of the "interests" of their own country, and by interests they meant, as a rule, material interest, power, wealth, population, and so on. In this they were simply following the average popular opinion of their peoples.

The idea of humanity as above the nations, as of God above all, working out His counsels for Humanity as above and beyond the nations, has, in the main, been absent from the great typical utterances of modern statesmen in the supreme crises of history for a long time past, though there have been great prophets of that larger ideal. But there are many causes to-day tending to bring this new and greater ideal within the ken of all. The world is rapidly becoming an economic whole. It is becoming ever more difficult for any people to keep out of the vortex when once the whirlpool is in motion. The alternatives are becoming more sharply defined, and we see ever more clearly that they must all fall or rise together.

The sense of this is beginning to penetrate the

mind even of those who do not accept the Christian view of the world.

The idea is not as yet clearly apprehended, but it is at least beginning to appeal that there is a common interest for all the nations, and that thus no enduring peace or prosperity is before any of them until they can find that line of common good and steadfastly pursue it. "The issue before the world," as one writer has said, "is Utopia or Hell."

If that vision is becoming clearer even to men who reject the Christian revelation of God, how much clearer should it be to those who have seen Him? It is truly amazing how slow Christian men have been to see what is so obviously involved in their faith. It is surely inevitably involved in faith, that God has not only a moral character, which forbids that the nations which believe in Him should in their dealings with one another break the law of justice, mercy and truth, but that He has a purpose which cannot be narrower than Humanity. For all who believe in God there is not only a moral order but a moral end, which includes all mankind. This inevitably implies that over all the nations stands Humanity, and this again that a lasting peace between the peoples can only be finally secured when they realise this and act upon it.

A few years ago this seemed nothing but an idealist's dream, but the vivid and terrible disclosure of what the cynical and realist spirit of *Macht-Politik* meant when translated into action, and the abyss which has opened before Humanity, has effected already a noticeable change, of which the proposal for a League of Nations is only one indication. "Many things," said Mr. Asquith, in a recent speech, "which seemed Utopian a few years ago no longer seem Utopian to-day."

This is the field of what ought to be a great and far-reaching propaganda of the Christian Churches in the near future. The struggle of the Allied nations in the field against *Macht-Politik,* and on behalf of freedom, is a struggle to secure this field of action, to make the world safe for international rights and for democracy. Just as the war of fifty years ago to abolish slavery formed the necessary preliminary to all that needed to be done in the way of education and social emancipation for the negro, so is it here.

It is a common thing in history for a vanishing phase of civilisation to uplift itself in a colossal effort to hold its own, and to try to strangle the phase that is being born. So the powers of absolutism and militarism as represented by the Central

Empires and Turkey have raised themselves in a colossal effort to overthrow the powers that stand for freedom and self-government.

Nothing can be easier than to point to superficial contradictions of this interpretation, to endeavour to show inconsistencies in the treaties and actions of the Allies, which seem to deny its truth. But broadly and massively it is true, and its truth is shown by the fact that the triumph of the Central Powers would necessarily mean the militarisation of the world for generations, a fact which I shall endeavour presently to demonstrate. On the other hand, the triumph of the Entente would, it is now practically certain, result in the formation of a League of Nations to secure peace. The former event, unless the whole earlier argument is wrong, would mean that Christendom would be the scene of endless wars.

The militarisation of the world under modern conditions would mean universal national conscription. Even state militia systems would no longer suffice; the struggle would be too keen, national hatred and suspicions too rife, the example of the greater States too powerful, the danger of the smaller nations too great in a world where the principles of freedom and national independence and moral right had been triumphantly denied.

Militarisation on the German plan would mean the segregation for three years of the youth of a nation at its most susceptible period of life, and the absorption of its mind in preparation for war. It has meant in Germany that for nearly fifty years the youth of the country has been paraded over the great fields of 1870-1871 and nurtured on the memories of three successful wars. It must inevitably happen that an abnormal system produces abnormal results. These results are seen in the almost complete ascendancy of a military caste, with purely military ideas. Its results are seen in the Brest-Litovsk terms. What we see here in one nation will, if that nation triumphs, produce the same kind of result throughout Christendom at large among all the free nations and the nations at present immune from war. Abnormal methods will in them as elsewhere produce pathological results. This is what makes the present crisis so tremendous. The question that is now up for decision is whether Germany shall succeed in imposing not simply her political system, but her militarist ideals, on the nations of all the world. But if she fails, if the basis of freedom and self-government be secured, and a League of Nations be formed, the whole outlook will be different. Only in that case would there be room

for such a further Christian propaganda of the mind and spirit for the great task of turning the minds of men from ideas, inspired on the one hand by ambition and on the other by fear, which will lead inevitably to a new cycle of more terrible and destructive wars, to ideas on which a free and noble world of States can arise, States which shall have learned to know the spell of Freedom, Freedom to follow the Law of God, and to seek His Kingdom.

In such a larger and finer world the individuality of nations would be as sacred as the individuality of men; the combative energies of men would be turned from the war with each other to the war with the dark powers of disease and death and ignorance and vice and poverty, and all the tragic element in human life, and to the winning of all the nations into the ever-growing, ever-coming Kingdom of God.

We have for many years been tending to think more and more of history in terms of biology, and to think of human progress as only to be won by slow and gradual evolution, "the aggregation of infinitesimal increments." That this is true of great tracts of human history is clear. But it is not a complete account of the affairs of men. Men are free to follow or reject their ideals, and therefore these affairs cannot be explained in

terms of mere biology. Races and generations and nations may fall away from true ideals, the contagion of evil passing through them by mass suggestion like a kind of fever or madness. All the vital forces are arrayed against the poison in the blood, and recovery can only come by a convulsive struggle, by a crisis in which it is life or death for all. Hence the Divine revelation teaches that there are in human history "days of the Lord," days of "decision," in which everything is at stake, and secret thoughts and hidden principles are revealed in the glare of "judgment."

Everything in such moments depends on whether the forces of good are strong enough to overwhelm the forces of evil. It is in just such a mighty vortex of opposing currents that we are living to-day. Something much greater is at stake than the earthly greatness of any nation. It is the fortune of all humanity for, it may be, many generations. The forces that are fighting for freedom and for the sway of law over the nations, are assuredly fighting for the future of the whole human race. The men who are dying for this cause are dying not for their own nation, but for all. Should they be defeated, the probabilities are that Europe will have nothing to show for the vast sacrifice but a darker, sadder and

more materialised world. Should they triumph there is hope that humanity may take a great leap forward, such as followed Marathon, the struggle of the Four Cantons, the liberation of Sweden and Holland, the French and the American Revolutions.

We can see now that all these earlier conflicts were leading on to this, for without them it would have been impossible; there would have been no freedom to fight for. But beyond it there lie unmeasured possibilities of good, a world set free from the curse of war and the fear, suspicion and hatred which are its inevitable companions, free to work out a life greater and humaner than history has ever known. The world will have paid a great price for such a victory, but history will say that it was well worth while.

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All inquiries should be addressed to:

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